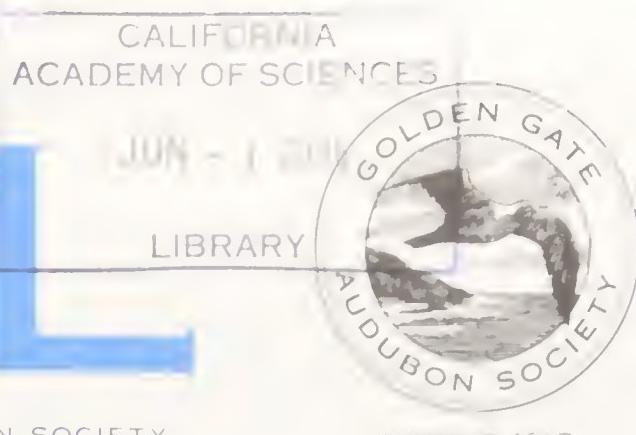


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VOL 91 NO 5 SUMMER 2006

IE GULL

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE GOLDEN GATE AUDUBON SOCIETY



EDITION 1917



Burrowing Owls to get new habitat at Albany Plateau in Eastshore State Park

Charles Denson

Win For Burrowing Owls at Eastshore State Park

In April, the Albany City Council voted to support creation of nine acres of new Burrowing Owl habitat at the Albany Plateau in the Eastshore State Park. Years in the making, this plan is a true success story of conservationists, sports-field user groups and local government coming together for a project that serves both the public and wildlife. At the April 3rd meeting, Albany Mayor Allan Maris cited the spectacular progress at Berkeley Meadow as testimony to the virtues of habitat enhancement.

The Burrowing Owl is one of smallest species of owls, standing just nine inches high and weighing only five ounces. And although these birds are trying to make a comeback in the Bay Area, they remain a "Species of Concern" in California. So when the East Bay Regional Park District spotted a Burrowing Owl at its newly acquired lands at the south parking lot of Golden Gate Fields, it was legally required

BURROWING OWLS continued on page 9

Cats Indoors! Campaign Launched

Golden Gate Audubon has partnered with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the American Bird Conservancy to provide public education on responsible cat ownership through our new *Cats Indoors* campaign. As cat predation becomes an increasingly persistent threat to Bay Area wildlife, including several rare species, this outreach has become an important step for conserving birds.

By 1994, Wildlife Rescue in Palo Alto was reporting approximately 25 percent of their patients between May and June were cat-caught native birds, and almost half were fledglings. These statistics are echoed throughout the Bay with the Lindsay Wildlife Museum in Walnut Creek also reporting that 30 percent of the animals it treats each year have been cat-caught. With cats becoming the dominant predators in suburban and urban environments, all bird species are at risk. But some of the most vulnerable to this threat in the Bay Area are ground-nesting birds such as California Quail, California Clapper Rail and California Least Tern. By providing cat predation education, Golden Gate Audubon is working to further protect these species and complement existing conservation programs, such as our *Save the Quail* campaign in San Francisco, our education and census work at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Regional Shoreline and our Least Tern restoration work

CATS INDOORS! continued on page 12



INSIDE

3 Volunteers Celebrate Earth Day

4 Barn Owls in Berkeley?

10 June Least Tern Festival

Enjoying our Bay Area Birds

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The Golden Gate Audubon Society was founded January 15, 1917, and became a chapter of National Audubon in 1948. Golden Gate Audubon Society Supporting Membership is \$25 per year. Renewals should be sent to the Golden Gate Audubon office. The board of directors meets the last Monday of every month (except August and December) at 7:30 p.m. in the chapter office in Berkeley.

The Gull is published nine times per year by the Golden Gate Audubon Society. The deadline for submissions is five weeks prior to the month of publication. Special third-class postage paid in Oakland, CA. Send address changes to office promptly. The post office does not forward *The Gull*.

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Nature Store hours: Monday - Friday, 9-12 & 1-5

Design and layout by CommuniCatronics

One of the best things about learning to bird is beginning to notice the wonderful diversity of species. Now I see different colors, markings and beaks on birds I once thought looked all the same. I notice the variety of bird songs coming from the trees—even when I can't identify each bird by its song.

At Golden Gate Audubon, we believe that conserving birds begins with appreciating and understanding them. Recognizing that our urban areas are home to a great variety of native wildlife is the first step in our commitment to care for local birds and the parks, shorelines and backyards they inhabit. Our mission is not only to protect birds, but to inspire Bay Area people to get involved in their conservation. This is why we are striving to expand our education and birding programs to reach more people—and encourage them to get involved.

Our programs have seen tremendous success this past year. We have increased our adult birding classes by four-fold. We have expanded and diversified our field trip offerings. And our Eco-Oakland Program is going strong, reaching roughly 3,000 underserved East Oakland students and community members annually. Many of the program's participants have never been to the shoreline or the Pacific Ocean before—yet nearly half of the students and their families have said they returned to one of these sites on their own after visiting them with us, and many report taking actions to protect wildlife.

This is success: when connection inspires a commitment to conservation.

This summer, I hope you will take advantage of the many opportunities Golden Gate Audubon offers to enjoy birds and explore the outdoors. Go on one of our field trips to Eastshore State Park, Lassen or the Farallones. Sign up for a birding class—and bring a friend. Or watch endangered California Least Tern chicks at the proposed Alameda Wildlife Refuge (see page 10).

I hope your summer adventures will deepen your commitment to protecting Bay Area birds. And I hope you'll share your enthusiasm with friends and neighbors. Together, we can inspire our community to appreciate the wildlife around us—and initiate our commitment to protect them for generations to come.

by Elizabeth Murdock, Executive Director

National Audubon Board Elections

Before June 30, National Audubon chapters in California, Hawaii and Guam are being asked to cast their votes for a new Western Regional Representative to the National Audubon Society's Board of Directors. I am honored to be one of three candidates running for this seat.

I believe that Audubon Chapters are the very heart of National Audubon's work. Chapters provide the primary link with wildlife enthusiasts in their communities. I also believe that chapter activities are the most effective way Audubon nurtures its strongest asset: you. Conservation cannot happen on a national scale without the commitment of thousands of individuals—beginning with people like you. I am continually amazed by your commitment: you turn out to City Council meetings, send hundreds of letters to decision-makers, and spend your Saturdays restoring local habitats.

I want to ensure that National Audubon invests in chapters and the conservation legacy they can help secure. When I served on National's Ad Hoc Committee on Chapter Relations in 2004-2005, we made progress in improving the Chapter-National relationship, but I believe we still have more opportunities to strengthen this relationship and collaborate to achieve our mission. I would be honored to serve on the National Board, and I hope I will have the opportunity to continue to build the strength of Audubon's chapters in this capacity.

by Elizabeth Murdock, Executive Director

Golden Gate Audubon Volunteers Celebrate Earth Day at Pier 94 in San Francisco



Colin Allen and Dudley Battle remove large growth of invasive French Broom.



Photo: Eddie Bartley

Early 30 Golden Gate Audubon volunteers honored the 36th anniversary of Earth Day on April 22 by restoring tidal wetland habitat at Pier 94 in San Francisco. The volunteer crew worked tirelessly throughout the sunny afternoon, removing invasive plants and clearing trash from the emerging wetland, which is already frequented by scores of bird species. Earth Day marked another notch in Golden Gate Audubon's ongoing restoration of this former hard-scrabble site.

Pier 94, owned by the Port of San Francisco, is located in a highly industrialized section of the southern waterfront. Over time, fill material on its rubble-filled shoreline began to subside, revealing a native salt marsh ripe for restoration of plant and wildlife habitat. Now in partnership with the Port and Hanson Aggregates, Golden Gate Audubon is reclaiming four acres as valuable tidal wetlands, where previously existed construction debris, landfill and poor hydrological circulation.

On Earth Day, GGA volunteers removed dozens of heavy bags of trash and several commercial-size recycling bins filled with invasive plants, such as French Broom, spartina cordgrass, fennel, and wild radish. The fruits of GGAs labors over the past few years are already evident, with nearly 30 bird species observed on Earth Day alone, including Great and Snowy Egrets, Black-bellied and Semipalmated Plovers, Black-crowned Night Heron, and an American Kestrel. Volunteers also spotted Killdeer, Canada Geese and American Avocets nesting on the site—all for the first time!

Special thanks to the volunteers and partners who made Earth Day 2006 a huge success, including: Hanson Aggregates, Norcal Waste Systems, Inc., Port of San Francisco, California Native Plant Society, and the Bates College alumni group. An extra-special thanks to our indefatigable volunteer leaders and board members Bob Bennett and Noreen Weeden, who have spearheaded GGAs efforts at Pier 94.

Join us this fall, when we plan another work day to remove invasive pampas grass and plant a large number of natives as the rainy season approaches.

(top) Noreen Weeden, Steven Bond carries a large sack of trash, while Bob Bass and Eddie Bartley continue to remove invasive plants. (middle) Dudley Battle hauling French Broom. (above) Enthusiastic volunteers removing invasive plants at Pier 94 wetlands.

Barn Owls in Berkeley? City Adopts Civic Bird

In April, the Berkeley City Council approved a resolution by councilmembers Betty Olds and Dona Spring adopting the Barn Owl as official city bird. Berkeley joins a growing number of cities with avian mascots: San Francisco has the California Quail; Portland and Seattle share the Great Blue Heron; Chicago honors the Peregrine Falcon, Washington, DC the Wood Thrush. At least 8 cities in Texas and 42 in Japan also have civic birds.

The council's vote was inspired by a recently formed owl advocacy group, launched by writer Lisa Owens Viani. A longtime birder, Lisa was surprised to hear the distinctive raspy wheezing call of a Barn Owl in her Berkeley neighborhood a few years ago. She began to track local owl sightings and learned of several nest sites in Canary Island palm trees. When one owl tree was cut down, Owens Viani organized Keep Barn Owls in Berkeley (KBOIB) to help educate residents about the value of these ghostly nocturnal hunters.

Another KBOIB activist, Donna Mickleson, used Barn Owl pellets in her second-grade classes at Berkwood Hedge School. When her students teased the pellets apart, they found what makes the owls such good neighbors: rodent bones, the remains of hundreds of rats, gophers, mice, and voles. A typical Barn Owl's diet consists almost entirely of small rodents. The owls' appetites are capacious: a captive ate 13 mice at one sitting, and a growing owlet may consume its own weight in rodents every night. In one field study, a family of Barn Owls accounted for 600 field mice in a single breeding season—and in mild climates like ours, they can raise two broods each year.

The Barn Owl hunts on silent wings. Special adaptations, including asymmetrically placed ears and a sound-channeling facial ruff of feathers, allow it to target prey in total darkness. Part of its midbrain is dedicated to localizing sounds in three-dimensional space.

Barn Owls historically nested in tree



Barn Owl chicks nesting on a building ledge.

cavities or on cliffs, but adapted to human structures: bridges, scaffolding, water towers, the light fixture of a Sears store. In urban settings the owls often choose palm trees, not the most secure nest sites: the owlets sometimes fall out. But the birds readily accept suitable nest boxes. KBOIB draws inspiration from the San Rafael-based Hungry Owl Project, which has distributed more than 200 boxes to homeowners, vineyards, parks, and at least one golf course. In Berkeley, a Cub Scout troop has volunteered to build boxes, and Mickleson hopes some will be installed at Willard Park, which has had a well-publicized rat problem.

Although the owl has a sinister reputation in some cultures, the ancient Greeks venerated it as the bird of Athena, associated with prosperity and victory. It seems an appropriate symbol for Berkeley, which likes to think of itself as the Athens of the West. The Barn Owl, found on every continent except Antarctica, also fits the city's cosmopolitan nature.

Common in California, the Barn Owl is in real trouble elsewhere in its range.

Changes in farming practices and the loss of older open barns have caused a steep decline in the Midwest. Seven states list the owl as endangered, and it's a species of special concern in seven others.

Not much of an insect-eater, the species weathered the DDT years but is vulnerable to anticoagulant rodenticides like bromadiolone and brodifacoum, also implicated in the deaths of other predators and scavengers. "Wipe out the natural predators," says Maggie Rufo of the Hungry Owl Project, "and there's not enough poison in the world to keep the rodents under control."

Last spring and summer, crowds gathered regularly on at least one Berkeley sidewalk to watch a pair of Barn Owls bring food to their voracious nestlings. "They're a beautiful, almost supernatural sight on a moonlit night," says Owens Viani. With a little encouragement, these birds will continue to provide what the Council resolution called "their wonderful, chemical-free form of rodent control."

by Joe Eaton

Joe Eaton is a local natural history writer whose column appears in the Berkeley Daily Planet.



BIRDING CLASSES

Summer Birding Classes

Golden Gate Audubon is offering the following summer classes at Albany Adult School, 601 San Gabriel Ave, Albany. For registration details, contact the school at 510 559 6580. More information is also available at <http://home.comcast.net/~lewis727>.

Introduction to Bird Sounds

Dennis Wright

Lecture: June 22, 7 – 9 p.m.

Field trip: Saturday, June 24 at Tilden Regional Park

Knowing bird sounds can be a great additional tool to identify birds and a wonderful way to add a new dimension to the joys of birding. Class begins with learning how and why birds make various sounds and provides a few ideas on how to remember them. A half-day bird walk in Tilden Park teaches how to focus and start "birding by ear." Pre-registration before first class is required. Fee \$24

Breeding Birds of the East Bay Wetlands

Rusty Scalt

Lectures: June 14 and 21, 7 – 8:30 p.m.

Half-day field trips: Saturday, June 17 and 24

Not all ducks and shorebirds leave us in spring. Waterfowl, shorebirds, raptors, terns and others like colonial nesting water birds come here to breed and raise their young during summer. Learn about these and other species through two lectures and visits to both fresh and salt marsh locations.

Pre-registration before first class is required. Fee \$35

Birding Basics

Eddie Bartley

Lectures: June 13 – July 22. No classes July 4 or 8

Field trips: Five two-hour trips on Saturdays in the East Bay

This 5-week course for beginning birders teaches students through lectures and field trips how to find and identify the more common birds in our area and discusses use of binoculars, field guides and other birding tools.

Pre-registration before first class is required. Fee \$48

Butterfly and Bird Enchantment in the Garden

Corinne Greenberg

Lectures: Six weeks starting June 13

Field trip: Saturday, July 15, 8:45 – 10:45 a.m.

Discover the beauty of California plants. Become captivated by fabulous amphibians and other fascinating creatures. Learn how to create ecologically healthy habitat for year round gardening. Become inspired by environmental activists and writers. Slide shows every week.

Pre-registration before first class is required. Fee \$42; materials fee \$5

Register Soon for Fall Birding Classes

Evening bird classes taught by Joe Morlan and endorsed by Golden Gate Audubon start September 6, 7 and 12, 2006.

Joe Morlan is co-author of *Birds of San Francisco and the Bay Area* and *Birds of Northern California*. He is also coordinator of the recorded "Northern California Birdbox" sponsored by Golden Gate Audubon.

Field Ornithology I

Part A (EA101): Tuesdays, September 12 – October 24

Part B (EA105): Tuesdays, October 31 – December 12

An introduction to birds and birding, combining basic field skills with study of bird ecology, biology, evolution and behavior.

Field Ornithology II

Part A (EA110): Wednesdays, September 6 – October 25

Part B (EA115): Wednesdays, November 1 – December 20.

A continuing in-depth study of identification and status of North American birds including ducks, vultures, and hawks.

Field Ornithology III

Part A (EA120): Thursdays, September 7 – October 26

Part B (EA125): Thursdays, November 2 – December 16

A continuing study of North American land birds including flycatchers, shrikes, vireos, jays, larks and swallows. meets on

Slides illustrate all lectures, and the text for all classes is *A Field Guide to Birds of North America*, fourth edition, by the National Geographic Society. The Sibley Guide to Birds is recommended as an adjunct text for Ornithology II & III. The instructor may arrange optional field trips on weekends. Bring binoculars and field guides to class if you have them. For additional information visit Joe's web site at <http://fog.ccsf.edu/~jmorlan/fall06.htm>.

All classes meet from 7 to 9:15 p.m. in room 307, Marina Middle School, 3500 Fillmore at Bay St. in San Francisco. Free parking is in the school lot off Bay St. on the east side of the building.

Registration begins July 1st. Fees are \$130 for each seven-week course (\$115 for EA125 which is six weeks). Pre-registration is advised. For more information call 415.561.1860. Register online at www.evolveww.com/ce.ccsf or mail or fax registration form, www.ccsf.org/Services/Continuing_Education/images/regform/reg.html.

Golden Gate Audubon monthly Speaker Series resumes in September with exciting programs in San Francisco and Berkeley. Watch for details in the September Gull.



FIELD TRIPS

SUSAN GROVES, COORDINATOR

Detailed trip descriptions are located on our website at www.goldengateaudubon.org. If you need further information or have difficulty reaching a trip leader, please contact Susan Groves at 510.654.5954 or groves.susan@gmail.com.

\$ Entrance fee

Biking trip

Birding for Everyone

San Francisco Botanical Garden at Strybing Arboretum

Saturdays, June 3, July 1, August 5,
10 a.m. – noon

Angie Geiger and Nancy DeStefanis,
415.387.9160, www.sfnature.org;
Darin Dawson

Meet at kiosk at front gate of Garden, 9th Ave. at Lincoln Way. Families welcome. Children must be accompanied by adult. Co-sponsored with San Francisco Nature Education and Botanical Garden.

San Francisco Botanical Garden at Strybing Arboretum

San Francisco

Sundays, June 4, July 2, August 6,
8 a.m. – noon

Allan Ridley and Helen McKenna,
415.566.3241; Ginny Marshall,
650.349.3780

Meet at front gate of Botanical Garden, 9th Ave. at Lincoln Way. The garden's micro-habitats attract array of resident, migrant, and vagrant birds.

Alcatraz Island

Thursdays, June 8, July 13

Christian Hellwig, 415.561.4908,
christian_hellwig@nps.gov and
Pamela Llewellyn, 510.843.7904,
seacreature219@sbcglobal.net

Join National Park Service biologist Christian Hellwig and GGA co-leader for

2-hour birding sessions on Alcatraz, offered exclusively to GGA Supporting Members. See article in May Gull for details. Email Pamela with name(s), date of walk, and contact info. She will confirm reservation and send travel info. \$

Eastshore State Park

Saturday, June 10 and Sunday, July 23,
8 a.m. – noon

Dave Quady, 510.704.9353,
davequady@att.net

Explore part of Eastshore State Park and Berkeley waterfront. Meet on north side of University Ave., just west of Seabreeze Market. Bring scope if you have one.

Butterflies in Tilden Park

Berkeley

Sunday, June 11, 11 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Sally Levinson 510.849.1730,
sal.levinson@gmail.com

Meet at "Little Farm" entrance in Nature Area, near Visitors Center. We'll observe butterflies and the plants they use. Walk about 2 mi. on flat trail along Jewel Lake. Grizzly Peak Blvd. to Wildcat Canyon Dr.; immediate left on Canon Drive entrance to park. Bear left at bottom of hill; park at end of lot.

Aquatic Park

San Francisco

Sundays, June 11, July 16, August 20,
9:30 – 11:30 a.m.

Carol Kiser, SF Maritime National



Mountain Bluebird.

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Historical Park Ranger, 415.561.7100 or 561.7104

Meet at foot of Hyde Street Pier (Hyde and Jefferson) for beginners' walk to discover birds in the urban environment. Trip is wheelchair accessible.

Corona Heights

San Francisco

Fridays, June 16, July 21, August 18

Charles Hibbard, Lewis Ellingham,
Brian Fitch

Meet at 8 a.m. at Randall Museum, Museum Way off Roosevelt. We'll enjoy views of the city and bay, check the east canyon woodland and the north forest for residents and migrants, as well as monitor the hilltop scrub and south cliff. For more information, contact Margaret Goodale, 415.554.9500, ext. 16, mgoodale@randallmuseum.org.

Lake Merritt

Oakland

Saturdays, June 17, July 22, August 26,
9 a.m.

Travis Hails, 510.451.1207 (no calls after 9 p.m.), travishails@yahoo.com

Meet at large spherical cage near Nature Center at Perkins & Bellevue Sts. Designed for novice and intermediate birders. Handicapped accessible.

Carpool to Field Trips

It's easy to carpool on GGA field trips. To join the mail list group, just go to <http://groups.yahoo.com/groups/GGACarPool>. Once you join, you can send and receive messages about carpools to GGA field trips. Give your message a title, "Offer Ride" or "Need Ride," plus location and date of the field trip. In the body of the message, note your approximate location (El Cerrito, South Berkeley, etc.). Others who read your message will contact you to arrange a carpool. Give it a try! If you have a problem, e-mail Bob Lewis at RLewis0727@aol.com.

Bus: Take 12, N, or NL bus to Grand & Perkins and walk into the park on Perkins. **Car:** park in free lot at boathouse, 568 Bellevue

Las Gallinas

Marin Audubon Society

Thursdays, June 22 and 29, July 6 and 13, August 10, 17, 24, 31,
8:30 a.m. – noon

Bruce Bajema, 415.456.6271

Meet at Las Gallinas parking lot. Join Marin Auduboners to watch nesting birds and chicks.

Lassen Volcanic National Park

Friday–Sunday, June 23–25

Dan and Joan Murphy, 415.564.0074,
murphsf@comcast.net

Family camping excursion. In past years, have seen Black Swift, Bald Eagle, Osprey, Townsend's Solitaire, Mountain Bluebird, Calliope Hummingbird, Black-backed Woodpecker, Williamson's Sapsucker and flycatchers, warblers and finches that breed in the mountains. Wear sturdy shoes. Bring lunch, liquids, sunscreen, hat, mosquito repellent, warm clothing.

Friday and Sunday: Meet at Manzanita Lake Campground store at 6:30 a.m. We'll bird around lake for 2-3 hours, return to camp for breakfast, meet again at store at 10:30 a.m.

Friday: Hike about 3 mi.; climb 700 ft.

Sunday: Drive through park with frequent stops for birding. Head home or camp after lunch at Summit Lake Campground.

Saturday: Campers meet by camp store at 7:30 a.m.; caravan north to Burney Falls, Fall River Valley and Baum Lake. Those staying at Hat Creek Resort meet us at 8 a.m. at Vista Point, 12 miles north of Lassen on Hwys. 44 & 89. All day excursion of about 100 mi. with 2-3 hr. midday break to swim at Lake Britton, hike or watch waterfall. Meet for dinner at Burney Falls picnic area.

Thursday night preview: Join us at 7 p.m. to watch wildlife at Hat Lake beaver pond. From Manzanita Lake, drive south into the park, about 12 miles. Park in lot to the left, just beyond hairpin turn at Hat Lake. Bring mosquito repellent, warm jacket and flashlight.

FIELD TRIPS continued on page 11

Bicycle Trips

Kathy Jarrett

510.541.1233 (call for cell number to call after 9 pm) kathyjarrett.com
Bicycle helmet required. Bring lunch and water. Dress layers. Hiking boots. All levels of birders and hikers welcome.
BART and all other transit information: www.bart.gov

Arrowhead Marsh

Alameda County

Saturday, June 10

Meet 7:50 a.m. at Fruitvale BART Station on 12th Street (Fremont or 8th Street East Creek Point). Head Ride Bay Trail from East Creek Point to Danner Marsh, Arrowhead Marsh, and Doolittle Pond Wildlife Sanctuary. Ride other trails in Alameda, return to Fremont and BART. Mostly on trails or roads with bicycle lanes.
Car: Exit I-880 at High St. in Oakland and go W toward BART. At 12th Street, turn onto Fremont and park on street. Bike back over bridge to right at T-intersection. Turn right on East Creek Point trailhead. (either at Levee or they join the E. Creek Pt. trail just south of Fruitvale Ave. between E. 17th St. and San Leandro Blvd.) Meet at 7:50 a.m. on city streets to trailhead with leaders.

San Leandro to Hayward on Bay Trail

Alameda County

Saturday, July 15

Meet at 8 a.m. at San Leandro BART or 8:30 a.m. at San Leandro Marina Park. Last parking lot. Bike along Bay Trail to Hayward Shoreline Regional Park 14 miles round trip; 20 miles if using BART. First part of trail is paved; remaining is easily negotiable.
Car: From I-880 in San Leandro, take Marina Blvd. exit (west) and in 1.4 mi. turn left onto Marina Dr. Go to end to last parking lot at San Leandro Marina Park. **BART:** Ride 3 miles to San Leandro Marina Park on bicycle lane on Williams St., just south of the station. Bay Trail info: <http://baytrail.alab.org>. Hayward Shoreline Interpretive Center. www.haywardrec.org

Quarry Lakes/Alameda Creek/Coyote Hills Bicycle Trip

Alameda County

Saturday, July 29, 8 a.m.

Meet on east side of Fremont BART Station at Tule Pond adjacent to parking lot. Ride about 24 miles, mostly on bike trails, very little uphill. From Tule Pond at Fremont BART Station, ride to Alameda Creek Trail, Niles Community Park, ponds at Quarry Lakes, and along trail to Coyote Hills. Return mid-afternoon.
BART riders will return via Union City BART station. **Car:** I-880 south toward San Jose. Take Mowry Ave. exit, go east toward Central Fremont. Turn left onto Mowry Ave. and go 2.3 mi. Fremont BART parking lot is east side of the station past Civic Center Dr. East Bay Regional Park District info: www.ebparks.org

San Francisco to Tiburon, Bicycle Trip

San Francisco and Marin County

Saturday, August 12

Meet 8:15 am at east end of bird pond at Crissy Field adjacent to Mason St. and Marshall, just west of Marina Blvd. and Lyon St. Bike to Tiburon, return via ferry. Bird at Crissy Field. Cross Golden Gate Bridge to Sausalito and bird at Bothin Marsh in Mill Valley. Bike to Richardson Bay Audubon Center, bird, bike to Tiburon ferry terminal. Blue and Gold Ferry: Lv Tiburon 2:30 pm, arr. Pier 41 3:15 pm. Optional: continue via Corte Madera Marsh to Larkspur Ferry Terminal. Golden Gate Ferry: Lv Larkspur Landing 3:30 p.m. arr. SF Ferry Bldg. 4:20 pm. Much of trip is on bicycle paths, some on roads.

Car: From Marina Blvd. in S.F. at Lyon St. keep right & go straight into Crissy Field on Mason St. Park in lot between Marshall and Halleck Sts. **BART:** Arr. Embarcadero Station at 7:30 a.m. Ride to Presidio on Bay Trail. View map at: www.nps.gov/prsf/ppt/html/maps.html



OBSERVATIONS

BRUCE MAST

APRIL 1 - 30, 2006

Much of April continued the same dreary, soggy weather pattern from March. But by the end of the month, the clouds broke up, the sun came out, wildflowers emerged, migrants started flocking in, and local breeders competed for the title of Hardest Working Songbird in Show Business. It was a good time to be afield.

LOONS TO DUCKS

A few unusual waterbirds gave birders a nostalgic look back at winter birding. Two Red-necked Grebes loitered offshore at Crissy Field, SF, through the 16th (mob) and 3 dropped in at Pigeon Pt., SM, Apr. 27-28 (RT). Pigeon Pt. seawatches those days also logged a Northern Fulmar plus 21 Pink-footed and 1,327 Sooty Shearwaters (RT). Multiple Fulmars were noted offshore at Bodega Head, SON, on the 16th (DN).

Petaluma (SON) birders located a Snow Goose at Ellis Cr. Water Recycling Facility on the 18th (RR) and at the Petaluma Pumpkin Patch on the 24th (TC). A Ross's Goose remained in residence at L. Merritt in Oakland (ALA) through the 8th (mob). A Cackling Goose wandered the salt ponds in Mountain View and Sunnyvale (SCL) through the 12th (BBo). On the 6th, another Cackler was discovered at Las Gallinas Sewage Ponds in San Rafael, MRN (MS, DE). A Tundra Swan remained at Shollenberger Park, SON, through the 22nd (RoS). Noteworthy Anatids included a couple Tufted Ducks and both White-winged and Black Scoters.

RAPTORS TO ALCIDS

An SF birder reported that an adult Northern Goshawk seen in flight over S. L. Merced was no April Fool's joke (ME). Two adult Broad-winged Hawks cruised north over the Marin Headlands, MRN, on the 13th (SB). On the 23rd, a Crested Caracara (*Caracara plancus*) was identified overhead from the Pomo Trail east of Shell Beach, SON (AW). The sighting was the more intriguing because, less than 2 weeks prior, 2 Caracaras had been sighted in MTY on consecutive days (April 10 & 11) along

Swanton Rd. and near the Carmel River Mouth (BFo, DS).

Solitary Sandpipers moved through Apr. 27-29, stopping at a pond along Interstate 505 at Leisure Town Rd., SOL (RM) and at Alviso Marina, SCL (MDa). Wandering Tattlers were noted Apr. 17-29 in SM and SF counties (AE, BFi, EK). On the 24th 3 Tattlers added interest to the art displays at the Albany Bulb, part of the Eastshore SP, ALA (BL, DQ, MBu, BBa). Red Knots were seen in small numbers this month, with a high of 8 at Arrowhead Marsh, ALA, on the 12th (CCa). A couple Pectoral Sandpipers passed through Apr. 25 & 27 at 1 Ranch, PRNS, MRN (RiS) and at Pigeon Pt., SM (RT). Pigeon Pt. also hosted a Rock Sandpiper on the 28th (RT). Bodega Head, SON, did the same on the 16th (DN). Red-necked Phalaropes began moving through the region on the 12th and maxed out at 150 at Hayward RS, ALA, on the 24th (BRi).

The Venice Beach gull-fest was apparently over for the year but a Franklin's Gull in breeding plumage checked out Palo Alto Baylands, SCL, on the 26th (CCo) and another did likewise the following day at Pigeon Pt. (RT). Glaucous Gulls lingered at Battery Crosby in the Presidio, SF, on the 13th (JC) and at Field Pt. Park., SM, on the 21st (EL). Two Elegant Terns on the 13th at Coyote Pt. Yacht Club, SM, appeared to be about a month early for post-breeding dispersal (RT). Additional pairs were subsequently observed in Menlo Park, SM (PM); Shollenberger Park, SON (RoS); and at Pigeon Pt. (RT). The season's first Least Tern showed up at Palo Alto Baylands on the 22nd and the Albany Bulb produced a 2nd sighting the next day (JH). A couple migrating Black Terns made a pit stop at the lake at Grant Ranch County Park, SCL, on the 30th (BH; BJ).

DOVES TO THRASHERS

Eurasian Collared-Doves were found in pairs in SM, SF, MRN, and SON counties (mob). A Barred Owl set up camp in the canyon west of Armstrong Woods Rd. Guerneville, SON, on the 17th (DN). A cou-



Tundra Swan.

ple Long-eared Owls maintained their roost at Ed Levin County Park, SCL, through the 24th (BRe, FV; mob). In the pre-dawn hours of the 24th a Common Poorwill was heard calling from an unusually low-elevation location in Milpitas, SCL (MOB).

Vaux's Swifts began moving through the region on the 13th. The season's first Black-chinned Hummingbird was reported Apr. 20 at a feeder in Antioch, CC (PS). San Jose, SCL, got into the act with Black-chinned along the Guadalupe River (BBo) on the 23rd and at CCFS starting the 25th (MM). Alpine-bound Calliope Hummingbirds visited the flowering eucalyptus at Coyote Pt. Museum on the 13th and 17th (RT, ADM). SF birders found female-type Calliope at Bayview Hill Park on the 17th (ADM) and at Lobos Dunes, Presidio, on the 30th (ME).

Lewis's Woodpeckers, which had been absent from the San Antonio Valley area this winter, began turning up on trip reports from the area by the 25th (mob). A Red-Naped Sapsucker started the month at Garin RP, Hayward, ALA (AMG; FS, oob). Many birders got to add Pileated Woodpecker to their SF county list, thanks to an Apr. 16 visitor to the eucalyptus grove at the top of Bayview Hill Park (MBr; mob).

Empidonax Flycatchers began moving through on the 14th, with a Willow Flycatcher at Mitchell Cyn. in Mt. Diablo SP,

CC, (BC; JRy); up to a dozen Hammond's at various sites; and Dusky Flycatchers at Glen Cyn. Park, SF (DA), and in Redwood City, SM (ADM; RT). On the 21st, a Cassin's Kingbird joined several Western Kingbirds in the Presidio, SF (ADM). Another Cassin's was located along the ridge line between SOL and NAP counties on the 27th (RM). Purple Martins trickled through the region all month and Bank Swallows made their first appearance at Coyote Pt. on the 20th (RT).

The Apr. 27 field trip to the SOL/NAP high country also tallied a Townsend's Solitaire (RM). Sunset Overlook in MRN hosted a Sage Thrasher on the 17th (DW). An unprecedented spring sighting in CA, a Red-throated Pipit flushed from the short grass near the coastal trail at Granelli and Central Ave. in Half Moon Bay, SM, on the 26th (AJ).

WOOD WARBLERS TO FINCHES

Warblers began moving in earnest in May, with most sightings consisting of typical western species: Wilson's, Orange-crowned, Yellow-rumped, Townsend's, Black-throated

Gray, Yellow, Hermit, MacGillivray's, and Nashville. By far the most unusual was a Lucy's Warbler on Apr. 30 in the eucalyptus trees near the Coyote Pt. Museum, SM (RT).

Visitors to the chaparral country north of the San Antonio Valley (SCL) were rewarded with Sage Sparrow on the 25th (GH). On the 27th, a Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow revealed itself at the Pine Gulch marsh at Bolinas Lagoon, MRN (DaH). L. Merced, SF, hosted a Swamp Sparrow Apr. 12-13 (PM, MZ, DA). Blue Grosbeaks returned to Patterson Pass Rd., ALA, on the 16th, with as many as 5 birds on site by the 30th (RC; JRi). Also on the 30th, 3 Yellow-headed Blackbirds provided fly-over views at Hayward RS (BRi). A couple Orchard Orioles remained at the community garden at Fort Mason, SF, for another month (MBr). A female Cassin's Finch was ID'd in the Oakland Hills, ALA, on the 6th (JL) and 2 more joined the migrant parade at Mitchell Cyn. on the 20th (MRa). Finally, a black-backed Lesser Goldfinch wandered in from TX to a feeder in Oakland's Glenview neighborhood on the 11th (TK).

BURROWING OWLS

from page 1
to take steps to mitigate the bird's dislocation before proceeding with plans to establish the Gilman Sports Field.

Golden Gate Audubon and other conservation organizations suggested Albany Plateau as a suitable place to establish additional Burrowing Owl habitat. The grassy uplands at this former landfill have low ground cover, plenty of insects and rodents, and little in the way of high perches for predators. Moreover, establishing habitat at this site is consistent with the Eastshore State Park General Plan and has been confirmed as appropriate by several agency biologists.

Groundbreaking for the Gilman Sports Fields is set for late this summer. These long awaited ball fields will help satisfy the need for recreational space by the cities of Richmond, El Cerrito, Albany, Berkeley and Emeryville.

Work on the Albany Plateau is slated to begin this fall, when three artificial burrows will be created on nine acres, leaving an adjacent nine acres of the plateau for informal recreation. The Burrowing Owl habitat will be surrounded by a trail and fenced to increase its chances of success and to limit impacts by dogs and other disturbances.

Golden Gate Audubon has worked closely with other conservation organizations, the California Department of Fish and Game, the California Department of Parks and Recreation, sports field user groups and the East Bay Regional Park District to reach this unique compromise. We are now eager to implement both the Gilman Ball Fields and the Burrowing Owl plans so the benefits to the community and wildlife can be realized.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

The Institute for Bird Populations is currently partnering with Golden Gate Audubon and other Audubon chapters to coordinate and recruit volunteers for a Statewide Burrowing Owl Survey. Field work is scheduled to take place from now until July 15, 2006 and again from May 15 through July 15, 2007. To volunteer for the Statewide Burrowing Owl Survey, contact Bob Wilkerson at 415.663.2051 or owl@birdpop.org. For more information, visit www.birdpop.org.

by Samantha Murray, Conservation Director

Wood Warbler Sightings

Lucy's Warbler

4/30 Coyote Pt. Museum, SM RT

Palm Warbler

4/6 S. L. Merced, SF THo

4/9 Harbor Way & Littlefield Ave., S. SF, SM RT

4/13 El Polin Spring, Presidio, SF JC

4/14-21 Bayfront Park, Menlo Park, PM, RFe SM

4/21 Junipero Serra Park, San Bruno, SM RFr

Northern Waterthrush

4/9 Berkeley Aquatic Park, ALA KA; HH

4/12-14 Charleston Rd. marsh, Mountain View, SCL BBo; MDo

Abbreviations for Observers. ADM, Al DeMartino; AE, Al Eisner; AJ, Al Jaramillo; AMG, Ann McGregor; AV, Ann Verdi; AW, Alan Wight; BBa, Bob Battagin; BBo, Bill Bousman; BC, Bill Clark; BF, Brian Fitch; BFo, Bud Fox; BH, Bob Hirt; BJ, Bob Juhl; BK, Barbara Kossy; BL, Bob Lewis; BR, Bob Reiling; BRi, Bob Richmond; CCa, Chris Carpenter; CCo, Charles Coston; CN, Chris MacIntosh; CS, Clark Stanton; DA, David Armstrong; DaH, David Henocker; DB, Dave Bowden; DE, Daniel Edelstein; DeH, Derek Heins; DF, Dea Fried; DM, Dominik Mosur; DN, Dan Nelson; DQ, Dave Quady; DS, David Suddian; DW, Dave Wimpfheimer; EDB, Ed DeBelue; Ek, Elisabeth Koster; EL, Eric Lithward; FS, Fred Safier; FV, Frank Vanslager; GH, Garth Harwood; GT, Gen Tepke; HC, Hugh Critter; HH, Hugh Harvey; JC, Josiah Clark; JH, Joe Herr; JL, John Luther; JP, Janna Pauser; JRi, Jean Richmond; JRy, Jennifer Ryding; KA, Ken Archambault; KO, Kris Olson; KP, Kay Partelow; LB, Len Blum; LH, Lisa Hug; LM, Lisa Myers; MBr, Michael Brodie; MBu, Michael Butler; MDa, Mike Danzenbaker; MDo, Matthew Dodder; ME, Mark Eaton; MM, Michael Mammoser; MOB, Matt O'Brien; MRa, Mark Rauzon; MRO, Mike Rogers; MS, Michael Stevenson; MZ, Matt Zlatunich; PM, Peter Metropoulos; PS, Paul Schorr; RC, Rich Cmann; RFe, Rich Ferrick; RFr, Roland Franz; RiS, Rich Stalcup; RM, Roger Muskat; RoS, Ron Storey; RR, Ruth Rudes; RT, Ron Thorn; SB, Steven Bauer; TC, Tara Clovis; THa, Tony Harrow; THo, Tim Howe; TK, Tim Kask; TP, Tim Perkins; W, William Legge; WW, William Wilson.

Semicolons separate original observers from subsequent observers. Abbreviations: mab = many observers; lab = other observers. Information is compiled from BirdBox transcripts and regional listservs. The author apologizes for any errors or omissions. Special thanks to Brent Plater for assistance in compiling data.

Abbreviations for Counties and Others. ALA, Alameda; BBA, Breeding Bird Atlas; CBC, Christmas Bird Count; CC, Cetacean; Cx, CCFS, Coyote Creek Field Station; Cr, Creek; Cyn, Canyon; DENWP, Don Edwards SF Bay National Wildlife Refuge; EEC, Environmental Education Center; GGR, Golden Gate Park; L, Lake; MDSP, Mount Diablo State Park; MPN, Marin; Mt, Mount; N, North; NAF, Napa NSMWA, Napa-Sonoma Marshes Wildlife Area; NWR, National Wildlife Refuge; OSP, Open Space Preserve; PPNS, Pt Reyes National Seashore; Pt, Point; Rd., Road; Res, Reservoir; RP, Regional Park; RS, Regional Shoreline; S, South; SB, State Beach; SCL, Santa Clara; SF, San Francisco; SFBBO, SF Bay Bird Observatory; SM, San Mateo; SOL, Solano; SON, Sonoma; SP, State Park; SP, State Reserve; WPCP, Water Pollution Control Plant



BACKYARD BIRDER

MEG PAULETICH

For spring break, we went to Hawaii with the whole family: our two children, their spouses, and the four grandchildren. One of the grandkids, Evan, who is nine and a half, seems to be my best candidate for birding buddy. For Christmas we gave him his own binoculars and a copy of the *Sibley Guide to Birds*. The book has scarcely left his hands, and he is getting better at using his binos, which are handy for whale watching too.

Sadly, looking for native birds in Hawaii most often requires quite a search involving long drives, so we concentrated on the birds around our house. Most are introduced species from all over the world, such as Saffron Finches, which are bright yellow with red-orange heads. Sounding like windup toys, the Northern Cardinals grab your attention. There are also smaller Yellow-billed and Red-crested Cardinals. Other common birds gaining a foothold are the Japanese White-eye, Warbling Silverbill, tiny Zebra Dove, Wild Turkey, and Grey Francolin, which screams from dawn to dusk, "Cheeseburger, cheeseburger!" Francolins are even noisier than the raucous morning chorus of India Mynahs.

For generations, one migrant has used the Hawaiian Islands as its wintering spot, the Pacific Golden-Plover. This bird is known for having the longest nonstop migration—from Alaska to Hawaii. Before leaving the islands, it sports beautiful breeding plumage and is prevalent on golf courses in its

handsome black-fronted best. Another native, the white Red-billed Tropicbird, occasionally dips over our roof, as does the local Barn Owl.

After I returned home, the rain finally stopped, and a plethora of my backyard birds greeted me. The first treat was a juvenile (brown back) Cooper's Hawk, which perched just off my deck in the Black Oak, still rather bare but beginning to leaf out. The bird spent at least 15 minutes with its back to me, sunning, scoping out my bird feeders (completely empty in its presence), and preening. I could easily see its rounded tail as it stretched and fanned out its tail feathers, distinguishing itself from its slightly smaller cousin, the Sharp-shinned Hawk, whose tail has a straight bottom edge. The two species are almost identical except for slight size differences (always subjective) along with the tail configuration. Raptors are fascinating to most people. Is there another avian family whose members have such a regal bearing and piercing stare? I would say raptors are unusually focused birds, which puts them at the top of the bird food chain.

My next surprise was a female California Quail on my deck. We have lived here for a decade, and about three years ago our neighborhood began supporting several small coveys of quail. Last summer we noticed one group of 12 or so that took dust baths and scratched around the front yard every late afternoon. Now they've found the



Northern Cardinal.

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

bird feeders since the female hopped off the deck to the cast-off seeds below the hanging feeders. I'm thrilled to see them making a comeback on my turf.

On Easter morning, one of our male Black-headed Grosbeaks flew to the feeder, making its first spring appearance. He even practiced his beautiful song, the one I eagerly await on sunny mornings. What an Easter gift! The males arrive before the females to stake out territories. We usually support three pairs of these gorgeous birds. They first showed up about six years ago. Last year they appeared late, while this year they seem early. I should have written their annual return dates on my calendar. This year I will start!

The grosbeak's singing competitor, the Purple Finch, let loose with his bubbly burst of melody right by my kitchen window this morning. He clearly impressed the female hopping around the flowering pear tree. Not to be outdone, a House Finch chimed in from the rosebush. Unimpressed, a male Spotted Towhee in his crisp new plumage concentrated on digging for breakfast below the feeder. He was joined by a Fox Sparrow, which is fattening up before he goes north to nest. Usually quiet, my perky Bewick's Wren put in his two cents' worth. Time has come to find a mate. The spring chorus has begun.

I love this old gang of mine. There's no place like home!

Meet the California Least Terns in Alameda

Return of the Terns Festival

Sunday, June 18, 10 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Crab Cove Visitor Center, 1251 McKay Ave., Alameda

Every year a colony of endangered California Least Terns travels about 2,000 miles from Latin America to nest at the Alameda Wildlife Refuge. You only have to travel a few miles to see them. At the annual Return of the Terns Festival, a Fish and Game wildlife biologist will take visitors on bus tours to see the terns tending their chicks. The hour-long tours will leave at 11 a.m., noon and 1 p.m. The fee is \$3 per person; children must be 8 years or older. Call 510.636.1684 to reserve a space. Slide presentations with spectacular images of Least Terns will be shown at 10:30 a.m., 11:30 a.m., and 12:30 p.m. Ongoing crafts and activities will take place at the visitor center.

FIELD TRIPS from page 7

Check campground bulletin boards or the office at Hat Creek Resort for our poster, campsite number, and any last minute changes in schedule.

From Bay Area, go north on I-5 to junction with Hwy 44 in Redding. East on Hwy 44 to northwest entrance of Lassen. Camping available at Manzanita Lake. Lodging about 15 mi. north of park at Hat Creek Resort, Old Station 530 335 7121. Information available from park headquarters, Mineral, CA 96063. Carpool availability.

SF Birds at Merrie Way

Sundays, June 25, July 23, 8 a.m.

Harry Fuller, 415.344.2363,

anzatowhee@yahoo.com,

www.towhee.net

Meet at Merrie Way, unpaved lot at west end of Pt. Lobos above Cliff House. Follow the birds and season at one of San Francisco's most beautiful spots.

Lake Merritt and Lakeside Park

July 14

Wednesdays, June 28, July 26,

August 23, 9:30 a.m. – noon

Hilary Powers, 510.834.1066,

hilary@powersedit.com; Ruth Tobey,

510.528.2093, ruthtobey@earthlink.net;

Travis Hails, 510 451 1207 (no calls after 9 p.m.), travishails@yahoo.com

Meet at spherical cage near Nature Center. For directions, see June 17 trip.

Tufted Puffins and the Farallon Islands

Sunday, August 6

Alan Hopkins, 415 664 0983, ash@sfo.com

GGA and Shearwater Journeys trip Depart Sausalito 7:30 a.m. aboard the Salty Lady for 8-hour adventure. Weather permitting, we'll continue to the Continental Shelf to look for deep-water species. GGA members: \$100; non-members: \$125 (both non-refundable). To register, send check, phone number and e-mail address for each person and a self-addressed stamped envelope. Mail to: Shearwater Journeys, P.O. Box 190, Hollister, CA 95024. For more information, contact leader.

East Shore State Park

July 22

Saturday, August 19, 9 a.m.

Rusty Scalf, 510.666.9936,

rfscalf@sbcglobal.net

Meet at end of Rydin Rd. at Point Isabel lot. Round trip along Bay Trail about 2 mi. on paved, flat ground. Habitat is open water, salt marsh and coastal brush. Central Ave. in El Cerrito west of the freeway. Turn right at first stop sign. Rydin Road on right for parking. Walk to park lot at the end of Pt. Isabel and walk across the path.

Abbot's Lagoon at Pt. Reyes

Saturday, August 19, 9 a.m.

Bob Lewis, 510 845.5001,

Rlewis0727@aol.com, Kate Peterlein of PRBO Snowy Plover Project

Meet at Abbot's Lagoon to look for Baird's and Pectoral Sandpipers, Snowy Plovers, and other migrant shorebirds. We also may bird other Pt. Reyes areas. Lagoon walk is partly in sand and can be strenuous. Bring water, a hat and sunscreen. From Olema or Pt. Reyes State Park take Sir Francis Drake Blvd through Inverness. Turn right on Pier 4 Point Road and go past Tomales Bay State Park. Abbott's Lagoon parking lot is on the left about 4 mi. after the state park.

Backpack Trip in Lassen Volcanic National Park

Shoreline Lodge

Friday, August 25 – Monday, August 28

Robin Pulich; David Rice, 510.527.7210,

drice2@comcast.net

Backpack in 3 mi. to Snag Lake and spend 3 nights in primitive camping by a stream near a large meadow. Should see flocks of mixed warblers and other songbirds, plus resident birds of the mountains. Bald Eagles, & migrating shorebirds. We will be above 6,000 ft. To avoid impact in fragile habitat, trip limited to 12 people. Everyone responsible for his/her own gear and food; some co-op or shared meals may be arranged.

Directors Elected to Golden Gate Audubon Board

Our membership has elected three directors to the Board of Directors in the 2006 annual election. Congratulations to Bob Bennett, Bob Lewis and Sylvia Stone. Each will serve a three-year term ending in 2009.

WINTER \$100

Martha Berthelsen, Berry Brosi, Vi Louise B. Bruene, Brenda Buxton & Stephen Walsh, Timothy J. Cleere, Cindy Cobb, Bruce & Myra Cobblewick, Fred Davis, Sheila M. Dickie, Lewis J. Feldman, S. M. Flynn, W. P. Foster, Robert Gesley, Clara Gerdes, Patricia Greene, Carole Gross, M. S. Grosse, Ann Gurbaxani, Meredith Hamilton, Leonard Horwitz, Charles N. Keating, Jean Lapez, Steve & Carol M. Lombardi, Edmund Louie, Elizabeth Madriz, Joseph Peter Mark, Carol Moll, Kim Nibblett, Daniel J. Richman, Krehe H. & Katherine S. Ritter, Benita Sachs, Janet Saevitz, Stanley Scher, Emily J. Serkin, Nancy Skinner, Susan M. Smith, Steve Spellman, Corinne Stefanick, Kathleen E. Sullivan, Marsha Ann Townsend, Lucile Van Der Wyck, Dr. & Mrs. Hugh Visser, Esther S. Wickman, Maria A. Wolfram, Victor K. & Brenda Wong, Dan Woodard

Binoculars: Dorothy Gregor

Eco-Oakland Environmental Education Program: The Clorox Company Foundation

Mark Anderson, Martin Arko, K.C. Bairey, Jack Bertges, Corwin & Caroline Booth, Vern Bothwell, David & Lanice Clark, Bena Currin, Jeffrey Edmunds, Suzanne Jones & Robert Elia, Virginia M. Elmore, Caroline A. Erickson, Ted L. Getchell, George C. Gorman, Jane Henthorne, Blair & Kathy Jarrett, Leslie Lethridge, Barry S. Levin, Kevin Liberg (PG&E Corporation Campaign for the Community), Laurence E. Malone, S. A. McIlraith, Michael D. Meadows, Barbara Meyer, Geraldine S. Nathan, Bill Pinkham & Wanda Mar, Elizabeth Pulling (PG&E Corporation Campaign for the Community), Anne Stenzel, Ann Stone, Mr. & Mrs. George Strauss, Linda L. Watts

CATS INDOORS! from page 1

at the Alameda Wildlife Refuge.

As part of the Pacific Flyway, San Francisco Bay is host to millions of shorebirds and waterfowl each year. With nearly all the Bay's original marshes and shorelines altered, protecting what little remains is critical to the survival of many native species. In addition to hosting more common species, the Bay area is home to the only known populations of California Clapper Rail and Salt Marsh Harvest Mouse, both federally-listed as endangered. Our diverse habitats also provide a home to other threatened and endangered species including Western Snowy Plovers and California Least Terns. When increased predation is combined with invasive species, human disturbance, habitat alteration and fragmentation, native species can be further pushed to the brink of extinction.

Despite the cat's popularity in the U.S., it is not an indigenous species to North America, and therefore our native wildlife did not evolve good defenses against this widespread and efficient predator. Cat predation also poses a threat to more than just birds and small mammals. As pets, cats have

huge advantages over native predators. Cats are protected by owners from diseases, predation, competition, and starvation, which are factors that control native predator populations. Native predators such as hawks and owls are at risk of being outcompeted for food as cats prey upon the small mammals and birds that constitute their food source.

Cats continue to become ever more popular pets, with Americans now owning 90 million cats, an increase of 13 million from 2003. In San Francisco, Alameda and Contra Costa counties alone there is a minimum estimate of 790,000 pet cats. As cat ownership rises, Golden Gate Audubon's *Cats Indoors!* campaign seeks to educate the public about how being a responsible cat owner can extend the life of both pets and the natural world. By following the steps outlined below, we can all work to protect wildlife, our pets and reduce the estimated 60-100 million stray cats in the U.S.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

- Keep your cat indoors and encourage others to do the same. Cats can get used to an indoor lifestyle. Cats that are allowed to roam outdoors can

encounter feral cats and are more likely to catch a disease.

- Identify your cat. Use a collar and tag or microchip your cat in case it gets lost outdoors.
- Don't feed unknown cats without making a commitment to finding them a permanent home. Feeding stray cats will only establish their presence and lead to rapid growth in their numbers. Take them to an animal shelter where they have a chance to be adopted.
- Spay or neuter your cat as early as eight weeks of age.
- Never abandon cats. This is illegal and cruel behavior. Instead take the cat to an animal shelter where it has a chance of being adopted.
- Support laws that prevent cats from roaming.
- If you are unwilling to stop free-roaming cats, do not attract birds to your yard by putting out bird feeders, bird houses, and bird baths.

For more information on this campaign, visit www.goldengateaudubon.org.

by Kellie Geldreich, Golden Gate Audubon Intern

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

The *Gull* is the newsletter of the Golden Gate Audubon Society. As a Supporting Member of Golden Gate Audubon, you receive a subscription to *The Gull*, a 10 percent discount on items purchased at our nature store, and the satisfaction of supporting local conservation efforts. Local members of the National Audubon Society are encouraged to join Golden Gate Audubon directly. Contact our office at 510.843.2222 for details.

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